



## For More Information:

**(US) National Safety Council**  
(800) 557-2366, ext. 2  
[www.nsc.org/ehc/sunsafer.htm](http://www.nsc.org/ehc/sunsafer.htm)

**Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention—SafeUSA**  
(888) 252-7751  
[www.cdc.gov/safeusa/water/water.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/safeusa/water/water.htm)

**(US) National SAFE KIDS Campaign**  
(202)662-0600  
[www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)

**American Academy of Pediatrics**  
(847)228-5005  
[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)



Kiwanis International Office  
3636 Woodview Trace  
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1-800-549-2647 North America

Childhood drowning often occurs in nonpool settings. Every year, children drown in lakes, streams, oceans, or even irrigation ditches and ponds. In fact, 60 percent of drownings occur in rural lakes, ponds, and gravel pits.



# Open Water Safety

## Tips for Open Water Safety

- Learn to swim before entering any water.
- Wear an approved personal flotation device if you are an inexperienced swimmer. (In the United States, the device should be approved by the US Coast Guard.)
- Always wear an approved personal flotation device when boating.
- Know your swimming limits and stay within them.
- Supervise children at all times.
- Never swim alone.
- Never swim after dark.
- Restrict activities to designated swimming areas, usually marked by buoys.
- Watch for dangerous waves and currents. Currents can carry even an expert swimmer far from shore. If you are caught in a current, swim parallel to the shore. Once you are out of the current, swim to shore.
- Know the local weather conditions and forecast before swimming and boating.
- Do not swim or boat during a thunderstorm.
- Remember that weather conditions can change quickly.
- Make sure the water is unpolluted.
- Remember that open water usually has limited visibility.

- Make sure the water is deep enough and nothing is submerged before you dive in headfirst. Feet-first entry is much safer.
- Be sure rafts and docks are in good condition. Always look before jumping off a dock to be sure you won't be landing on someone.
- Avoid plants and water creatures. They may be dangerous.

**Never swim in drainage ditches:** They are for water run-off and are not places for swimming or playing in the water. After heavy rains, they can turn into fast-moving rivers that can easily take a life. Even the strongest swimmer is no match for currents in a swollen ditch. Debris in the ditch can add to the danger.

**Alcohol:** Anyone who has consumed alcohol should not swim at all. Use of alcohol or other drugs puts swimmers at a serious risk for drowning. Alcohol impairs thinking, coordination, and ability to judge distance, depth, speed, and direction. Alcohol also interferes with the body's ability to react to danger. An intoxicated person can easily drown in water no deeper than his or her hips. A person under the influence may not be able to stand up after falling. If enough alcohol is consumed, resuscitation may be impossible, even after immediate rescue.

## In Case of Emergency

### To help a child who is struggling in the water:

1. Yell for help.
2. Extend something long, such as a rope, tree branch, or pole.
3. Throw a floatable object, such as a life jacket, kick board, or even an empty gallon jug.
4. If you must enter the water to assist, take a flotation device large enough to carry two people safely. Keep the device between you and the child.

### To help an unconscious child in the water:

1. Have someone call 911 or the area's emergency telephone number.
2. Carefully lift the child out of the water.
3. Check breathing and heartbeat.
4. Once the airway is clear, provide rescue breathing or CPR as needed.
5. Even if the child seems normal when revived, he or she should see a doctor right away.

*The information in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your doctor.*